



JEREMIAH W. (JAY) NIXON, GOVERNOR • RONALD J. LEVY, DIRECTOR

PAULA NEESE, DIRECTOR
CHILDREN'S DIVISION

P.O. BOX 88 • JEFFERSON CITY, MO 65103-0088
WWW.DSS.MO.GOV • 573-522-8024 • 573-526-3971 FAX

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Resource Providers,

The purpose of this letter is to address the issue of social networking as it pertains to foster youth. It is not permissible for resource providers to post photos and/or identifying information regarding foster youth on any social networking venue, including but not limited to Facebook and MySpace. The fact that an individual is in foster care is protected information.

Internet use is a daily occurrence. It is imperative that you, as the parent, monitor all youth in your care regarding their use of the Internet. The [State Technical Assistance Team's](http://www.dss.mo.gov/stat/index.htm) website, <http://www.dss.mo.gov/stat/index.htm> provides links to PowerPoint presentations and information sheets regarding intervention and prevention of child injury and death, child abuse, and child neglect. One of these presentations, Internet Safety, contains valuable information and helpful resources related to intervention and prevention of dangers on the Internet. <http://www.dss.mo.gov/stat/statpres/prevention.htm>

Rule of Juvenile Court 117.02(m) outlines that without prior specific authorization from the court, foster or adoptive parents, foster care institutions, and other persons and institutions providing out of home care for the juvenile shall not:

- (1) submit to audio or video recordings regarding the juvenile; nor
- (2) permit photographing or audio or videotaping of the juvenile, by the public.

There are situations when photos are taken at sporting and school events that are published without any prior notification. These are situations that are not controllable and prior approval was not possible. Anytime that a foster youth's photo is to be published there should be no identifying information indicating that the youth is in foster care. If a reporter wishes to write an article about a foster youth, the Family Support Team must be in agreement and the court must provide specific authorization.

We want our foster youth to be able to live "normal" lives. Being homecoming king/queen, acting in a school play, participating on a sports team or band are important life experiences and being in foster care should not prevent such. However, we must also protect our foster youth and their unique situation of being in foster care.

Sincerely,

Paula Neese, MA, LCSW
Director

RELAY MISSOURI
FOR HEARING AND SPEECH IMPAIRED
1-800-735-2466 VOICE • 1-800-735-2966 TEXT PHONE